

Message Text

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S/S - MR. SEBASTIAN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 037846

EXDIS, FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS:PFOR, RH

SUBJECT: US/UK CONSULTATIONS ON FEBRUARY 21

1. THE FCO AND WE HAVE ANNOUNCED THE BEGINNING IN WASHINGTON ON FEBRUARY 21 OF BILATERAL MEETINGS BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND OURSELVES ON THE SUBJECT OF SOUTHERN AFRICA. THE BRITISH PLAN TO SEND SIR ANTHONY DUFF AND A TEAM OF THREE OFFICERS FOR SEVERAL DAYS OF TALKS ON THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN SITUATION WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON RHODESIA. DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR TALKS WITH US, THE BRITISH TEAM WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH LONDON AND A DECISION WILL BE MADE AS TO WHETHER DUFF CAN EXPLORE IN GREATER DETAIL WITH US AND AMBASSADOR BOTHA SOUTH AFRICAN VIEWS ON HOW THE NEGOTIATIONS CAN PROCEED.

2. THE BRITISH ASKED US TO KEEP THE FACT OF BILATERAL TALKS QUIET AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN LONDON TOOK US SOMEWHAT BY SURPRISE. A MEETING DURING THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY

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21 HAS BEEN ON THE AGENDA SINCE DUFF'S AND RICHARD'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON DURING THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 7. WE HAD HOPED THAT WE COULD SPEED UP THE BRITISH VISIT AND THEREBY PURSUE PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S OFFER OF CONSULTATIONS, BUT SECRETARY OF STATE CROSLAND'S ILLNESS MADE AN EARLIER MEETING IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE BRITISH.

3. AMBASSADOR BOTHA, ON LEARNING OF THE BRITISH VISIT TO WASHINGTON, HAS CALLED US TO SAY THAT HE FEARS CAPE TOWN WILL INTERPRET THE NEWS OF BILATERAL TALKS AS A "SLAP IN SOUTH AFRICA'S FACE". HE SPECULATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT EVEN SAY THAT IT WANTED NOTHING MORE TO DO WITH THE BRITISH. WE HAVE URGED BOTHA TO COUNSEL PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING IN CAPE TOWN AND HE HAS AGREED TO DO SO.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THAT NEITHER FOURIE NOR MULLER ARE IN CAPE TOWN. IF YOU HAVE ANY HINT THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE LIKELY TO OVERREACT TO THE BILATERAL US-UK TALKS AND THE IMPLIED POSTPONEMENT OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SOUTH AFRICANS, YOU SHOULD POINT OUT AT WHATEVER LEVEL YOU FEEL APPROPRIATE THE US-UK TALKS FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 21 HAVE BEEN PLANNED FOR SOME TIME AND, IN FACT, THE DECISION TO HOLD THEM PREDATES VORSTER'S MEETING WITH SMITH. WE HAD HOPED THEY COULD BE ADVANCED, BUT WITH CROSLAND'S ILLNESS THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE. NO SLIGHT OF SOUTH AFRICA NOR ITS WILLINGNESS TO PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE IS INTENDED. IT IS OUR INTENTION TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH AND PROCEED WITH CONSULTATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

5. BOTHA HAS ASSURED US THAT HE HAS TOLD CAPE TOWN THE US-UK BILATERAL TALKS REPRESENT "NO DEVIATION" FROM OUR INTEREST IN PURSUING CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SOUTH AFRICANS.

HARTMAN

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